

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Kristine Nadolski and Karen Rice

EHCY State Coordinators



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Carolyn Stanford Taylor, State Superintendent

Homeless Student Enrollment in Wisconsin 2003-2019



Homeless Student Nighttime Residence Data 2012-2019



Total Unaccompanied Youth Enrollment 2012-2019

3,000

2,500

2,000

1,500

1,000

500

2,078

1,892

1,891

2,165

2,283

2,405

2,286

2012-13

2013-14

2014-15

2015-16

2016-17

2017-18

2018-19



Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth

- Higher incidences of acute and chronic illnesses, depression and anxiety
- Homelessness at any time in early childhood is associated with poor classroom engagement and poor social skills in early elementary school.
- The achievement gap between homeless and low-income elementary students tend to persist, and may even worsen over time.
- A youth who experiences homelessness is 87 percent more likely to dropout of school.



McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- Originally passed in 1987
- Reauthorized in 2015 by ESSA
- Works hand-in-hand with IDEA, Title I-A and other federal education programs



McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Main themes:

- Identification
- School stability
- School enrollment
- Support for academic success
- Child-centered, best interest decision making



Homeless Liaisons

Every LEA must designate a McKinney-Vento liaison able to carry out their legal duties.

- **Assist** unaccompanied youth/parents with placement, enrollment, and knowing their rights.
- **Disseminate** public notices of educational rights.
- **Inform and assist** with accessing transportation.
- **Mediate** enrollment disputes.



Homelessness Defined

The term “homeless” children and youth means:

“Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence—”

What exactly is a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence?



Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

- **Fixed:**
 - Stationary, permanent, not subject to change
- **Regular:**
 - Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis
 - Consider the relative permanence
- **Adequate:**
 - Lawfully and reasonably sufficient
 - Sufficient for meeting the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment

Can the student go to the **SAME PLACE** (fixed) **EVERY NIGHT** (regular) to sleep in a **SAFE AND SUFFICIENT SPACE** (adequate)?



Eligibility

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in a public or private place not designed for ordinary use as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans (cars, parks, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, etc.).
- Children from migratory families who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances



Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Definition:

Youth who meet the definition of homeless **AND** are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (i.e., youth living with relatives on an emergency basis, youth living with a friend or runaway).



School Stability

Each LEA shall, according to each child's or youth's best interest:

- Continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed; OR
- Enroll in the resident public school.



School of Origin and Residence

- **School of origin:** school that child or youth attended when permanently housed or last enrolled.
- **School of residence:** school in the local attendance area where the child or youth is staying.



Transportation

LEAs must provide transportation to and from the school of origin, including until the end of the year when the student obtains permanent housing, at a parent's or guardian's request (or at the liaison's request for unaccompanied youth).

- If staying in the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation to the school of origin.
- If crossing LEA lines, both LEAs must determine how to divide the responsibility and share the cost, or they must share the cost equally.



Transportation—Key Provisions

- LEAs must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.
- LEAs must eliminate barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of students experiencing homelessness (including transportation barriers).



School Enrollment

When remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest or what the parent, guardian, or youth requests:

Students eligible under McKinney-Vento are entitled to immediate enrollment in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend; even if:

- Students do not have required documents, such as school records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents; or
- Students have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.



Enrollment in Preschool

- States must ensure that children experiencing homelessness have access to public preschool programs administered by the State Education Agency (SEA) or LEAs.
- Preschools are included in the school of origin definition.
- Liaisons must ensure access to Head Start, early intervention (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA.



Support for Academic Success: Coordination with Other Laws/Programs

- Students eligible under McKinney-Vento are automatically eligible for free school meals.
- LEAs must coordinate McKinney-Vento and special education services within the LEA, and with other involved LEAs
- Information about a McKinney-Vento student's living situation is a student education record subject to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)



Role of the Homeless Liaison (continued)

- Every LEA must designate a McKinney-Vento liaison able to carry out their legal duties.
- Ensure that:
 - Children and youth in homeless situations are identified; enrolled in and have full opportunity to succeed in school; receive educational services, including preschool; and are referred to healthcare, dental, and mental health services; and
 - Parents and guardians are informed of McKinney-Vento rights and can participate in their children's education.

Directory: <https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless/liaisons>



Role of the Homeless Liaison (*continued*)

Ensure that:

- Public notice of educational rights is posted
- Disputes are mediated
- Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth are informed of transportation services and assisted with transportation arrangements to the school of origin
- Data on homeless students are collected and submitted
 - School personnel providing McKinney-Vento services receive professional development and other

support



Role of the Homeless Liaison (*continued*)

Ensure that:

- Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school and that procedures are implemented to identify and remove barriers that prevent them from receiving credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at a prior school, in accordance with state, local, and school policies.
- Liaisons must participate in professional development and technical assistance as determined appropriate by the state coordinator.
- SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences



Role of the State Coordinator

- Modules and other resources
- Technical Assistance
- Professional Development and Trainings
- Collaboration across DPI and other agencies
- Collaboration with national partners
- Compliance Monitoring
- Community of Practice
- Grants



Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grant Funds

EHCY 3-year Innovation Grant

Purpose is to go above and beyond McKinney-Vento law, districts encouraged to focus on academic achievement of students experiencing homelessness

3 year grant cycle

Open to all school districts in the state

NEW 2-year Compliance Grant

Purpose is to equitably distribute grant funds across WI, provide increased TA to help districts with compliance, and to prepare districts to apply for the 3-year innovation grant

2 year grant cycle

Open to all districts not funded by the 3 year grant



Current EHCY Funded School Districts

Ashwaubenon School District
Eau Claire Area School District
Fond du Lac School District
Frederic School District
Green Bay Area Public School District
School District of Janesville
La Crosse School District
Madison Metropolitan School District

Menominee Indian School District
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District
Milwaukee Public School
Racine Unified School District
Seymour Community School District
Sheboygan Area School District
Sun Prairie Area School District
Whitewater Unified School District
Wisconsin Rapids School District



Resources

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Education for Homeless Children and Youth
<https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless>
- SchoolHouse Connection
<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/>
- National Center for Homeless Education
<https://nche.ed.gov/>
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
<http://www.naehcy.org/>



Questions?

Contacts:

- Kristine Nadolski
kristine.nadolski@dpi.wi.gov
- Karen Rice
karen.rice@dpi.wi.gov

